

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on SB 522, HB 5499, HB 6335,
SB 942, HB 6334, and a request to bring up HB 5615

March 2, 2017

Dear Co-Chair Kennedy, Co-Chair Miner, Co-Chair Demicco, Vice Chair Flexer, Vice Chair Gresko, Vice Chair Somers, Ranking Member Harding, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

Please accept the public hearing testimony for the following five bills, with a request to bring up HB 5615.

1) Oppose SB 522, which would allow bear hunting. I am deeply opposed to this due to the science behind bear reproduction and the lack of a need for bear hunting here in Connecticut, not to mention the inhumane aspect of bear hunting. The bear population in Connecticut is not rapidly expanding, as they are extremely slow to reproduce, as well as have an evolutionary adaption called delayed implantation, which keeps their numbers in check. The state of Connecticut should instead be focusing on educating the public about bear interactions and ways to prevent it, such as not leaving food unattended outside, covering and securing garbage cans, and keeping other food attractants far from human habitations. There are currently only 700 bears in the state of Connecticut, and we should be protecting them, not following the examples of Florida and New Jersey, states who hunted their bears to such an extent that the bear hunt had to be shut down after one year (in Florida), and allowing the killing of mothers and their babies (in New Jersey).

2) Oppose HB 5499, which would expand Sunday hunting to allow the use of shotguns, rifles and muzzleloaders. It is disconcerting enough that one needs to be so vigilant in the woods when walking/hiking/biking/bird watching due to the number of hunters out there, to allow an expansion of their arsenal to even more dangerous weapons than bows on Sundays would take away what little time non-hunters have to enjoy the great outdoors. Even now, on Sundays, outdoor enthusiasts need to worry about bowhunting, to add guns to the mix would only increase the onus placed on those of us who do not hunt. I would like one day a week when I can go for a hike and not need to worry about myself or my companion animals getting shot.

3) Support HB 6335, the ivory sales ban, which would clamp down on illegal ivory and rhino horn sales by prohibiting the sale of ivory and rhino horn in the state of Connecticut. With elephants and rhinos being hunted to the point of extinction, and states all up and down both the east and west coast making it illegal to sell ivory or rhino horn, it is high time Connecticut became more globally conscientious and joined the millions across the world who oppose the slaughter of these majestic animals for their body parts. Being a coastal state, Connecticut has

ports that could easily allow poachers to import ivory and rhino horn, and with the responsibility of having such ports open to the world, we need to take a stance against the killing of innocent animals and the extirpation of a species. Poachers have exploited the federal laws we have that seek to interrupt their lugubrious business, and with our border states, New York and New Jersey, passing laws prohibiting the sale of ivory and rhino horn, it would follow that the poachers would come to Connecticut to peddle their nefariously gotten wares. HB 6335 does NOT criminalize the possession of ivory by Connecticut residents, interfere with inheritance or noncommercial gifts, or prohibit museums and true antiques from being bought or sold. The only people this bill is aimed against are the poachers and terrorists who profit off illicit ivory and rhino sales.

4) Support with amendments SB 942, Cecil's Law, anti-trophy hunting. I am rigorously against any legislation that allows for the slaying and importation of animals killed as "trophies." The African "big five," as they're known to trophy hunters--lion, elephant, rhinoceros, leopard and buffalo--are hunted exclusively for their dominant status, thereby leaving the families of the animals killed without a strong central figure, allowing for social chaos and unrest to settle on the animals hierarchies. In some cases, this breeds extensive problems for humans, as in the case of lions, where younger, juvenile males will make rash decisions and prey on livestock and harass human villages. If the older males were allowed to live as nature intended, the younger males would be kept in line, thereby preventing a host of problems for both animals and humans alike. Trophy hunters seek to take the biggest and best of whatever species they target, which is anti-Darwinism, and allows for weaker genes to be passed down to the next generation. The whole concept of killing for a trophy is eerily reminiscent of a serial killer, as these trophy hunters are not killing for food or to protect their land, but for the collecting of body parts. Connecticut should not allow such barbarism within state borders, and with many transportation companies disallowing the transport of trophy hunts, it's time Connecticut follows suit and dissuades all such coarse activities.

5) Support HB 6334, which would require registration for all brick and mortar animal shelters and allow for inspections and creation of regulations that define standards of care. Every other animal care facility in Connecticut, including pet shops, breeders, kennels, groomers, and municipal animal shelters, requires registration and inspections as part of the cost of operating. This provides the basic necessities for animals, such as food, water, a temperate environment and exercise, as well as keeps overcrowding and neglect from occurring. Currently, animal control officers have no recourse if a brick and mortar shelter is abusing animals. This law would close that loophole, bringing ALL animal care facilities in Connecticut in line with the basic standards of care that all animals require. With some infamous cases of brick and mortar animal abuse cases in the news lately--such as Fred Acker, owner of SPCA in Monroe, CT--bringing this issue to the forefront, legislation to prevent it is absolutely necessary. Connecticut has laws to regulate nearly every business, ensuring best practices for consumers and those involved, yet there are no laws to require best practices and standards of care for living creatures in brick and mortar shelters. Connecticut needs to close this gap and

stop preventable instances of animal abuses from occurring. This would also lighten the tax payer budget, since it would curtail the expenses incurred by the state to prosecute and rectify the malignancies of uncaring and negligent shelter owners.

6) Bring up HB 5615 for a public hearing. HB 5615 would give local control to allow municipalities to determine whether or not they want to ban trapping. Connecticut should defer the right to allow/disallow trapping to its municipalities, considering the difference variegations interspersed throughout the state. Not all municipalities want to allow trapping, due to its inhumane and indiscriminate nature. Any animal, including humans, can become caught within a leg hold trap or body crushing trap, which can lead to an excruciating and prolonged death. Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New Jersey have all taken steps to either ban or severely restrict these traps, due to their inherently dangerous and lethal propensities. Trapping also does not reduce the populations of target species, for fur-bearing animals tend to increase their reproductive rates when their numbers are in a precipitous decline.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to testify on these important bills.

Sincerely,

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